

# Black dogs have more trouble than most finding new homes

By JENNIFER WRAY

Suburban News Reporter

Getting shot in the leg just might have been one of the luckiest things that's happened to Joy, a black Labrador retriever mix.

Joy, who was wounded in June and is now in foster care after extensive surgery, has a story that will likely pull on the heartstrings of potential adopters.

Other big black dogs — a category so large that dog experts have given them their own acronym, BBD — have a more difficult time attracting an owner.

It's a national problem that is seen locally at the Franklin County Dog Shelter, said Lisa Wahoff, its executive director. There are a number of elements working against big black dogs, said Wahoff and Susan Smith, the shelter's spokeswoman.

Sometimes they're associated with breeds with bad reputations, such as Rottweilers or chows. Other times it could be that the dogs don't stand out in the shadowed confines of their cages at the shelter.

Some people might be superstitious about black dogs or might find them threatening, said Smith.

"For some reason, people think they look scarier," she said.

Wahoff and Smith talk about Leo, an affectionate and attentive 42-pound black lab mix who has been at the shelter since mid-June.

"If he was any other color, he wouldn't be here anymore," Wahoff said.

Or there's Tootsie, a 52-pound, year-old shepherd mix.

A high-energy dog who is housebroken and knows basic commands, "she's ready to rock," said Wahoff.

Visitors to the shelter often bypass big black dogs for ones who have poorer behavior, said Smith.

In the end, it takes about three times as long for a big black dog to be adopted, according to the shelter.

Its employees have attempted to better their chances with themed posters and a Web posting that champions their cause. They've also improved lighting in the cages and lined them with red blankets to help the dogs stand out.

"We need to market them differently," said Wahoff.

## BBD seeks home

At 1½ years old, Kevin, a tall and lanky lab mix, has spent a third of his life in the dog shelter and another third with Trish Neel-Wilson and her husband, Greg Wilson.

The pair, Clintonville residents with two dogs of their own, have fostered 10 dogs over the years. They have their theories on why black dogs often linger at the shelter.

"First of all, I think there's just a lot of black dogs," Neel-Wilson said. And in a dark cage, "you can't see how pretty their face is, you can't see their tail wagging," she said.

Fear is also a factor, Wilson said. Because of Kevin's size and a booming — if rare — bark, "people are kind of afraid of him," he said.

The ideal owner for Kevin will be someone who has had

a dog before, who is active, has a fenced-in yard and is willing to work with him, said the couple.

"He would respond really well to someone who could spend time with him," Neel-Wilson said.

"He loves to run out and run around the yard. He loves to retrieve."

In short, said Wahoff, "he's a really good dog."

## A lucky pair

While Kevin and a number of other big black dogs linger at the shelter or in foster care, Garrett — since renamed Ludwig — was adopted late last month by Diane Pitts and her husband, Leonard.

The Canfield couple were visiting their son, a student at Ohio State University, when they came to the shelter.

Initially they were looking for a yellow lab. They hadn't considered a black dog because they'd recently lost a female black dog to cancer, Pitts said.

However, the couple broadened their search after learning how difficult it is to find a home for black dogs.

"I thought, 'how sad.' I had never thought about it," Pitts said.

They chose the 2-year-old, 70-pound lab because "he seemed to just kind of bond with my husband," Pitts said.

"I just think he's who we were meant to go home with," she said.

Reynoldsburg resident Michelle Richards and her husband, Brandon, adopted Gabe, a black lab mix, in June.

Gabe came to the shelter as a puppy but was not adopted immediately and spent his adolescence in the shelter and a foster home.

"I saw him online, and his picture — he just got me with his picture," Richards said. "He just looked like he was smiling."

When she talked to the woman fostering Gabe, "I said he was so cute and I couldn't believe he had been there for so long," she said.

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# Dublin Foundation Amfahr repays \$62

By KATHLEEN L. RADCLIFF

Dublin News Reporter

The Dublin Foundation has completed its internal audit and investigation in connection with a missing \$62,000.

The Board of Governors accepted the resignation of treasurer Michael Amfahr April 17, after Amfahr admitted taking foundation funds without authorization.

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Gabe, she said, "is a sweet boy, very cuddly," and is good with children and the other dogs in the household.

"I've told several people that I've talked to that I couldn't believe that there was this issue with the black dogs," Richards said.

More information on adopting dogs is available at the shelter's Web site: FranklinCountyDogs.com or by calling 614-462-4360.

A "Mingle with Our Mutts" event will be held from noon to 2 p.m. Sunday at the shelter, 1731 Alum Creek Drive.

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See BLACK, Page 13

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